

I'm not making
enough money: now
what??

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How do I make money?

- French to English translation (international development, corporate communications, non-fiction books) and French interpreting (mostly court)
- Typically about 50% translation/interpreting and 50% classes and books
- In 2019, almost exactly 100K (gross) after deducting subcontracting, about 60K from translation/interpreting and 40K from classes/books. 95% direct clients.
- Work about 35 hours a week, 4-6 weeks vacation



In part I of this presentation

- “Many freelancers underestimate or even radically underestimate how much they need to earn in order to achieve the same level of financial security as someone with a traditional job.”



And...

- “If a given rate fits *your* financial goals, it’s not too low. The only question you need to answer is whether that rate fits your financial goals. No one gets to tell you what to charge.”



The conflict?

- Many freelancers are charging rates that are simply too low to meet their financial goals, and thus are:
 - Working very long hours just to make ends meet
 - Not making ends meet in a sustainable way



Today, we will

- Look at the difference between “I can’t earn more” and “I choose not to earn more”
- Look at options for increasing your income
- Learn a quick-start method for marketing to direct clients



“Help! I’m not making enough!”

- Do you have enough work, but at rates too low to meet your income goals?
- Or do you have too little work, but at decent rates?
- Or both: too little work AND too low rates



Hobby, or business?



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You get the picture!

- If you're translating as a hobby, don't worry about making money!
- If you're translating as a business, worry about making money!
- “Hobby” or “business doesn't depend on the activity, but on your attitude toward making money



Signs of the hobbyist mindset

- “I feel bad raising my rates because my clients are so nice!”
- “I know what I need to earn, but I feel greedy charging that much!”
- “I’m a word artist, not a money-grubbing businessperson!”



Another mindset shift

- “The client made me...”
- Lower my rate
- Do extra work for no extra money
- Translate 10,000 words in two days
- NOPE! They asked, and you said yes!



Unscientific calculation



Can you earn more?

- Raise rates with existing clients
- Work more
- Raise rates with new clients
- Change the type of client you work with



Or not?

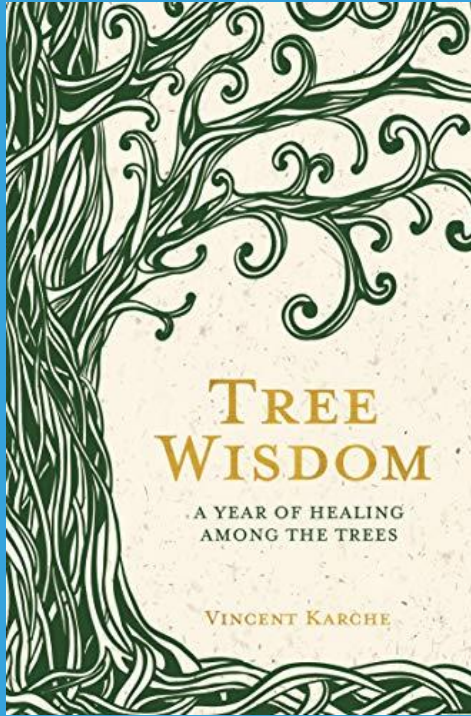
- Types of clients that have a rate ceiling (i.e. many large agencies)
- Non-lucrative specializations (poetry translation?)



Mini case study



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Data points

- My required hourly rate: \$90
- Main client: Colorado courts, which pay \$55 an hour plus mileage and travel time
- Except: I love it!
- Private-sector clients pay more
- Longer assignments “pay more,” because I only translate 4-5 hours per day



Options



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Options

- Limit the number of assignments
- Look for more private-sector clients
- Prioritize full-day assignments
- Look for well-paid remote interpreting work
- Look for work in other states/countries and travel
- Give up this type of work



A potential plan!

- Limit court work to two assignments a week if less than four hours
- Send a letter of introduction to one law firm a day
- Contact all local agencies that might have conference work (one per week)
- Network with French conference interpreters in neighboring states



Choosing not to earn more

- Other priorities
 - Fulfillment
 - Family/other loved ones
 - Needing low-maintenance clients
 - Geographic location
- Make sure you're not saying "can't" when you mean "choose not to"



For example...



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Direct clients

- Generally (but not always) pay more
- Generally (but not always) want direct contact with you
- Generally (but not always) require fewer add-on tasks such as Xbench, fill out QA assessment, etc.



Quick-start marketing

- Target ONE industry/sector. Patent law firms, content marketing companies, NGOs
- Find a contact person
- Non-GDPR: contact via short (125 words), highly-targeted e-mail
- GDPR: contact via paper letter



Check out...



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Check out...

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Guest post: Finding direct clients through direct marketing

By [Corinne McKay](#)  [August 19, 2019](#)  [Guest posts](#)  [8 Comments](#)

This is a guest post by German to English translator [Sarah Silva](#). Sarah lives in the UK and specializes in chemistry translations; she became a translator after a first career working with paper, flooring and pharmaceutical coating manufacturers. This post is based on Sarah's own experience developing and implementing a direct marketing campaign, and she's also teaching an online class on direct marketing campaigns, starting on September 4.

A DIRECT MARKETING CAMPAIGN TO GROW YOUR TRANSLATION BUSINESS – IT'S ALL IN THE FOLLOW UP

Many of us have tried marketing to win new clients, by email or post. But if we're honest, few of us really follow up effectively, if at all. You may regard the follow-up process **with narrowed eyes and gritted teeth**, resisting it all the way. After all, it feels hard and you don't want to appear



Always:

- Focus on the client's needs, not your life story
- Include a “hook” or how you found them
- Give a specific example of what you can do for them
- Invite them to keep the conversation going



Finding a contact person

- Never send to info@companyname.com (no one will respond)
- Find a specific contact by sleuthing online or calling
- Company website if you're lucky; or LinkedIn+Hunter.io or another e-mail address verifier



Example

1. Look at Gates Foundation list of grantees.
2. Identify entities working in Haiti or West Africa
3. Go to their website; look for a specific contact person (for me: someone who works with Haiti or West Africa)
4. If sending by mail, you're done (mailing address undoubtedly on your website)
5. If sending by e-mail, is email on the website? Can you find e-mail through Hunter.io or a similar tool?
6. If not, call them if you're feeling brave



Sample text

- “Dear Ms./Mr. XYZ: As a French to English translator specializing in the development sector, I recently came across ABC’s website while researching NGOs working in Senegal. I see that you recently launched a polio vaccination project in West Africa, and I can imagine that there might be a need for someone to provide French to English translation services for that. Would you be the correct person to speak with about offering my freelance services?”



Increasing your income is:

- Challenging
- Doable
- Entirely up to you



Questions???

